

C O P Y

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August 9, 1966

Mr. Robert Welch  
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Dear Bob:

After reading this latest (August 1966) monthly Bulletin, especially the first page, it becomes more evident than ever to me that the John Birch Society, with you at its helm, is beyond salvation.

I am herewith resigning from the Council and from the membership of the John Birch Society and also as associate editor of the American Opinion magazine. Please have my name removed as soon as possible from the J.B.S. stationery and from the American Opinion cover.

My intention so far was not to resign, but to ask for a thorough re-examination of our policies, at a meeting of the J.B.S. Council. As you know, a good beginning was made in 1963, which met with the approval of all the members of the Council attending the two consecutive meetings (September and December), but the whole effort was later thwarted by you, in open contradiction to unanimously taken decisions. I intended to pick up the threads which run along the initial lines and policies of the J.B.S. and along the basic considerations and motives of our members and illustrate on a number of vital issues how we, or rather you, have strayed away from them.

But the rapid succession of events, the accelerated disintegration of leadership in the J.B.S. and my lack of leisure to make a detailed study of what was

happening to the J.B.S., have prevented me from realizing this plan and have at the same time forced me to choose the way of submitting my resignation rather than prolonging indefinitely a situation which is becoming intolerable for me.

The reasons for my resignation can be summed up in two points: you have failed to implement the solemn and much repeated promise that we "mean business every step of the way", and you have failed to provide the leadership which an organization with the huge task the John Birch Society had taken upon itself, calls for.

We have gradually, but definitely and progressively been fleeing reality, real problems, real issues, the real struggle against the communist conspiracy. (At the time when the public opinion was outraged by what was happening in Mississippi and the Congo, and thus receptive to an elementary, sensible and American message, we took no position. Instead, you were devoting your energies to elaborating vague and arbitrary distinctions between republics and democracies, or giving high-flown, superficial and pointless dissertations on the Illuminati.).

We have increasingly avoided taking a stand on the burning issues of the day, although there is nothing more educational than a clear stand and a good moral example. Instead, our position has been kept on the safe, lofty and inconsequential level of "eternal truths". On some vital problems you have proclaimed explicitly that the J.B.S. "does not take a stand".

You have advised members to be sober and level-headed and avoid intemperate remarks, while standing out with your own intemperate remarks about a number of problems and situations. The task of explaining what you meant or did not mean by this or that statement has, besides causing considerable embarrassment, drained too much of the best energies of our members. We can no longer afford that waste of effort.



On the most immediate and decisive issue of the world situation, Vietnam, you have promoted the State Department line in regard to the regime of Diem, and then the "Vietnik" line of unconditional (without any ifs and buts) withdrawal from Vietnam, which is exactly what the communists want. Then, suddenly, you have made an about-face and taken the line of "When are we going to win in Vietnam - and why not?" Which one is the real Robert Welch?

You have been emphatic from the beginning about our basic position that we are fighting the communists and nobody else, but you have allowed the enemy to stir and exploit in our ranks one of the most explosive issues, anti-Semitism. Against all our basic principles, you have permitted, or even given your explicit blessing to the founding of the Jewish Society of Americanists, which is a monstrosity in every respect. When an open and avowed enemy of the J.B.S., Benjamin Epstein of the Anti-Defamation League, declares that he feels like vomiting when he hears of such an organization, he is being more sincere to the J.B.S., to the public opinion and to the U.S. than the founders and promoters of the J.S.A.

And this issue is basic: the J.B.S. was founded on the principle that we are making no discrimination and distinction between Americans, except on the ground of their stand on the communist conspiracy and their fundamental loyalty to the principles of the Founding Fathers. We, or rather you in the name of all of us, have violated those principles and you could not have possibly been unaware of the fact that the cleavage between one group (religious, racial, national, etc.) of Americans and "the rest of Americans" is precisely the line along which the communists operate.

The traits of defeatism, which I detected at an early date (- if we cannot impeach Earl Warren, we cannot win! -) have been accentuated in the monthly

bulletins and in your contacts with J.B.S. members. This latest bulletin is a most telling example.

In the vital issue of our belief in God, you have taken an ambiguous stand and finally accepted a suggestion for amendment of our basic motto, in spite of your own convictions.

Torn between the adulation of some members, for disinterested or interested motives, and the ruthless attacks and slanders of the enemy, which you were unable to take, you have lost any definite line of conduct. While initially speaking and insisting that we would have 1 million members within two years after the foundation of the J.B.S., you have given up any talk of achieving that, without any pertinent explanation or due change of strategy. Instead, you have made to the press in New York the embarrassing statement that we do not want to grow beyond some 300,000 members, because otherwise we would become too strong and we do not want power(!!)

This is all just listing in a hurry the most glaring shortcomings of a leadership which is leaving the J.B.S. without direction, goal or leadership.

Why you have done that, I do not know. I wish to believe that it is simply because what you started out and promised to do was beyond your capabilities.

A true leader must possess not only a keen intelligence and a vast knowledge, which you have, but many more qualities, which you do not, or not sufficiently.

First of all is a definite set of values, of absolutes, among which I place first the belief in God. From that basic absolute flows the rest, the definite aim, the consistency between goals and policies, the indispensable personal self-confidence. Also essential is the ability for balanced reasoning, the ability to encompass in one's judgment all the pertinent facts and



factors, weigh them properly and assign to them, in the total outlook and concrete conclusions, the place they merit. (The indiscriminate and unqualified lumping together of Haile Selassie and Khrushchev or De Gaulle and Mao Tse-tung does not clarify issues, but confuses them. It does not contribute to understanding, but makes it more difficult.)

A true leader must be able to inspire confidence in the victory of the cause he is representing, and not breed a sickly complex of defeatism and futile martyrdom.

Finally, once he has made sure that he is right, a true leader must have the fortitude to pursue his course under the most ruthless attacks and not be deterred or deflected by any earthly power.

All these qualities of genuine leadership you have not displayed (or only partially), as many people, to their great dismay, are coming to realize.

But if the key to the understanding of what is happening in and to the J.B.S. were just in your personal shortcomings, the whole problem would be less disturbing. There have been, however, some strong opinions that the case is more complicated, mainly in the sense that your personal ambitions were absolutely outweighing any other considerations. For a long time, I have rejected those opinions. Now, I am not sure.

But what appears evident is that you failed to rise to a full understanding of the nature of leadership, especially the kind needed today to accomplish the task of the John Birch Society.

Nobody will dispute your merits in founding the J.B.S. and saying things about communism and about the failure of those responsible for the destinies of the United States and the free world to fight communism.

But these merits have been offset by your adopting a line of least resistance in the last few years, of flight into abstract truths and of insistence on the patently senseless dogmatic assertion that "all we need to win is sufficient understanding".

The relationship between a leader and his followers is not a one-way street. It is a spiritual and moral contract with mutual obligations, whereby the first and foremost obligation is that of the leader to keep the promise and unwaveringly defend and fight for the cause which he proclaimed and which rallied the fighters. I, for one, - and I am sure thousands of other people, understood in this sense your emphasis on individual responsibility. It is a quality which must start at home, with the one who proclaimed it.

The essence of leadership is precisely what it says: to lead, not to follow or placate or try to please everybody. The leader must set the goal, determine the direction, choose the means, assure continuity and consistency, overcome disruptive diversity, not by yielding to pressures, personal tastes and preferences and trying to be nice to everybody, but on the contrary, by drawing a clear line between right and wrong, true and false and then inviting, resolutely - with all the patience and indulgence for personal foibles and sensibilities, - those in error to rectify their course.

This is precisely what you have not done. While very impatient with any disagreement with whatever decision you had taken or project you had initiated, you have used enormous amounts of energy to solve problems and difficulties not by determining right and wrong, true and false, useful and detrimental, but by placating irreconcilable opposites and asking individuals with opposite stands to continue working together and behaving as people of one mind, while leaving unsettled and untouched the controversial issues which were dividing them.



This is too well-known to dwell further on. You have even made, in writing, remarks to that effect.

That is not leadership. In a situation of unprecedented moral, spiritual and intellectual confusion, the primary need is not flexibility, but clear views, definite yardsticks and unyielding determination in applying them. Zig-zags can be tactically wise, but they cannot be a good foundation for a successful strategy. And uncertain trumpets have never been known to lead to victory.

You have progressively deprived the J.B.S. of the necessary clarity of outlook, of the determination to fight and win, of firm principles to be adhered to, of the spirit of complete faith in America and the cause of freedom. You created the J.B.S. and then you killed its spirit, thereby dooming it to failure.

And these are too serious times to yield to any consideration of personal friendship, which I once did feel for you. Our task is too big and responsible and so are the stakes, for America and every one of us. We do not live in normal times, but in times where we are either making history, - if we live up to the example of the Founding Fathers, - or we become helpless victims, to be used by the communists as historical fertilizer for their conquests and harvests, - if we lack the necessary will, courage and perseverance.

I have never been a shirker. And that is precisely why I can no longer tolerate the present position. What we are doing is not fighting, but contemplating, observing the flow of events and trying to make judicious appraisals and remarks, at a safe distance. That is not my concept of struggle to save America and destroy communism, and that is not the message I heard on May 22 and 23, 1959, when I became acquainted with the John Birch Society, through your two-day presentation. What we are doing now is not fighting, but surrendering gradually, and I want no part of it.

Your conscience guides you, but mine guides me. And I can bear the privilege and load of friendship, trust and support which members of the J.B.S. have given me, only if the basis on which they were given is preserved. Otherwise not.

In any case I can no longer, as a member of the Council of the John Birch Society and associate editor of the American Opinion magazine, share the responsibility for the way the J.B.S. affairs are being run, while having no part, no say and no influence in determining its policies.

As you well know I have, more than anybody else, voiced my opinions and constructive criticism from the beginning. Unable to refute my arguments, which took grave aspects by 1963, you have reacted by personal hostility. In the hope that there might still be a chance of straightening out things and fulfilling the hopes which the J.B.S. had awakened in the hearts of countless Americans, I have not allowed your petty attitudes and very soberly planned and executed vendettas to influence my behavior and actions, nor to drive me out of the J.B.S. Even now, I would have preferred to put issues before the J.B.S. Council and, if need be, before the members. But the burden of my work has been and still is too big to allow the necessary time to follow, analyze, systematize and put on paper all the inconsistencies, confusions, contradictions and breaches of our basic lines in the way you have been conducting the affairs of the J.B.S. Besides, events have been running fast and so has the progressive deterioration of your leadership.

So, I can no longer wait, but must resign first and present the full case and give a full account to the members later.

The communist conspiracy can be broken and the United States can be saved only by an organized effort which has an aim, a definite set of values and



absolutes, clear views and a boundless faith that America is right, coupled with an unbreakable determination that the United States and freedom must prevail. I had hoped that the J.B.S. would embody that organized effort.

Now it is clear that the J.B.S. is not and will never be the destroyer of the communist conspiracy and the savior of America. That is the point to which your leadership has brought it.

The concrete results are the best verdict on a policy. And the results are, in your own words, ... "from one city to another ... acrimonious disputes ... raging among our members". This is not a denunciation by the enemy. It is your own statement, which defines the stage we have reached after eight years of existence and work, and of spreading of "understanding". And if that is the prevailing situation among our members, what can we expect from non-members, and what are the chances of the J.B.S. to win and influence them and bring them "understanding"? But you have not left the question unanswered: "And about all I usually accomplished, of course, in trying to pour oil upon these troubled waters, was to get myself completely splattered with oil." Which sums it up.

At this point, it is immaterial why you have done what you have and failed to do what you have failed to do. The results are there. And closing your eyes before the hard facts of the situation, as you have done in 1963 and subsequently, will not change it. Nor can the J.B.S. be saved by the pernicious and senseless shift of perspective, from that of the J.B.S. saving the U.S. to that of the J.B.S. being our foremost concern, and the salvation of the U.S. secondary.

I did not join the J.B.S. in 1959 to serve the J.B.S., per se, much less to serve you personally. I thought that the J.B.S. had chances of becoming a valuable tool in the main struggle of the twentieth century and that you

would unflinchingly do your utmost to implement the original promises. The contrary has happened. To replace the struggle for the defeat of the communists and the victory of America with a personal adulation of Robert Welch and a preservation of the John Birch Society, regardless of what happens to the country, - does not make sense to me.

I am very sorry indeed to leave the John Birch Society and thus end the organizational links with its members, the many thousands of fine patriots and personal friends. But to remain in the J.B.S., and be increasingly unable to answer their multiplying questions about the J.B.S., was no longer possible.

I also sincerely regret to end my J.B.S. affiliation with the members of the J.B.S. Council. I was proud of my association with them because of their staunch patriotism and their fine personal qualities. Those among them whom I know better and with whom I had the opportunity of working more closely, I have come to like as true Americans and respect for their dedication to the foundations of this country.

But you have left me no choice. You have not only given us the overall leadership which has reduced the John Birch Society from a potential historical force to an organization which is increasingly frustrating its members and decreasingly disturbing the enemy, but you have reduced the J.B.S. Council to a mere listening forum, without any influence in shaping the decisions of the J.B.S. The honor of belonging to an organization and a council is inseparable from the responsibility that goes with it. I can no longer enjoy the honor without the responsibility.

And I see no possibility of correcting the situation under the present conditions, for you have shattered my confidence in you and my certainty that you have been and are doing your best.

Sincerely,

